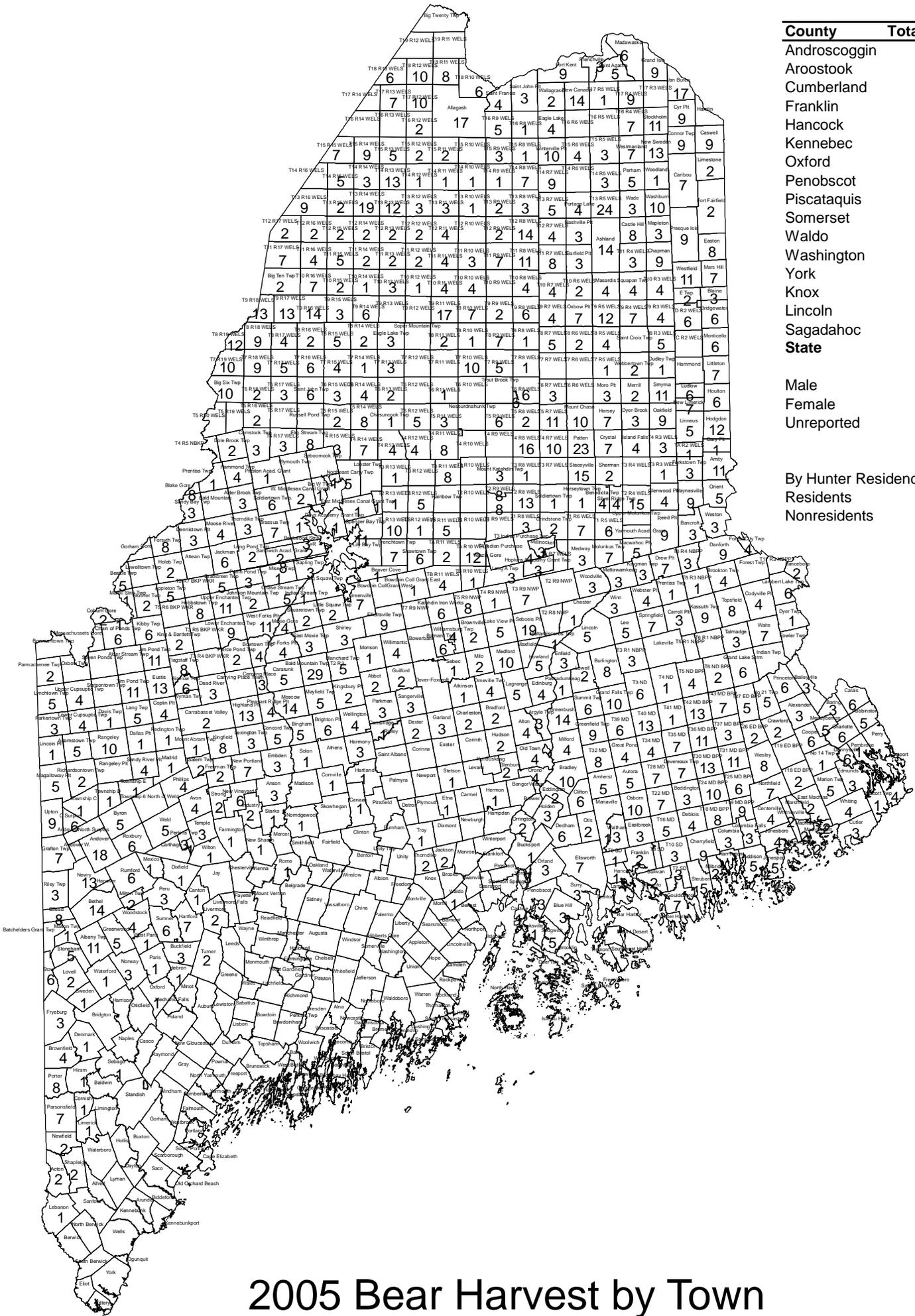


County	Total
Androscoggin	4
Aroostook	882
Cumberland	1
Franklin	134
Hancock	152
Kennebec	1
Oxford	211
Penobscot	349
Piscataquis	346
Somerset	443
Waldo	6
Washington	328
York	16
Knox	0
Lincoln	0
Sagadahoc	0
State	2873
Male	1543
Female	1320
Unreported	10
By Hunter Residence	
Residents	914
Nonresidents	1959



2005 Bear Harvest by Town

Maine's 2005 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bear in 2005 opened August 29 and closed November 26. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout this 3-month period. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 29 through September 24. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 12 and closing October 28. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31.

The 2005 harvest of 2,873 bears is below recent harvest levels. During the previous 5-year bear seasons between 3,500-3,951 bears were harvest (average 3,837 bears). In 2005, 2,247 bears were taken over bait (78%), 318 bears were taken by hound hunters (11%), 130 bears were taken in traps (4.5%), and 68 were taken by unreported methods (2.5%). During November, only 110 bears (4%) were harvested by approximately 175,000 deer hunters. Most bears were taken early in the season, with 2,596 bears (90%) harvested before the end of September. Heavy beechnut crops, in alternate years, provide an abundant food source for bears, which delays their entry into dens and leads to a higher harvest of bears by deer hunters. However in recent years, beechnut crops have been at low to moderate levels and appear to have lost the alternate year fluctuation. Reports indicate that the beechnut crop was poor this year. Early den entry dates observed during our telemetry studies and the low harvest by deer hunters support this observation.

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

Bears were harvested in 25 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs). No bears were taken in WMDs 21, 22, 24, 25, and 30. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 mi² of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 3 at 21 bears/100 mi² followed closely by WMDs 10, 6, and 28 with 20 bears/100 mi², to 16 bears/100 mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested less than 15 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 10/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 13 of the State's 16 counties. Most bears (882) were harvested in Aroostook County accounting for 31% of the harvest. No bears were taken in Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting is reflected in the harvest distribution by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 1,959 bears (68%) of the 2,873 bears tagged during 2005. Visitors and Maine residents took most of their bears over bait and with the aid of hounds. Visitors accounted for most of the bears taken over bait (73%) and with the use of hounds (72%), whereas Maine residents accounted for most of the bears harvested by unreported methods (68%), during the deer seasons (83%), and in traps (57%). However, in recent years there has been an increased interest in bear trapping by non-resident hunters and trappers.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2005, guides helped take 83% of bears shot with hounds, 73% of the bears taken over bait, 46% of trapped bears, 18% of the bears for which method of take was unreported, and 2% of the bears taken by deer hunters. Guides assisted 209 residents (23%) and 1,759 nonresidents (91%) with their successful hunts in 2005.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 54% (1,543 bears) of the 2005 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 91% (2,615 bears) of the 2005 harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 10 bears (< 1%).

Prospects for the 2006 season

The Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods, unless management concerns require changes to the lengths of hunting or trapping periods. In 2006, the season will remain similar to those in recent years. Under our current bear season framework, the season begins on the last Monday in August and closes on the last Saturday in November, generally a 13-week period. In 2006, the general bear hunting season will open on August 28 and close on November 25.

Maine's spring 2006 bear population estimate remains near 23,000 bears. In accordance with our management goal, the harvest levels experienced since 1999 appears to have stabilized the bear population. We are monitoring the survival of adult female bears closely; if survival of adult females declines, restrictions to harvests may be required. Given the recent changes in annual beechnut production, it is difficult to know whether beechnuts will be scarce or abundant this fall. If beechnuts are scarce, bears should enter their dens early, which would result in another low late season harvest. The current bear season framework should result in harvest between 3,500 and 4,000 bears in 2006.